

[3 August, 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

Government had announced VRS/VSS on a number of occasions. The last VSS was opened on 10.12.2000 for one month and it was extended upto 28.2.2001 in terms of orders of High Court of Karnataka. In anticipation of VSS offers, a budget provision for grant to BGML was made this year. But, there are no pending applications for VSS in the current financial year.

Mineral exploration

1472. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government propose to encourage exploration of prospective mines excavation and its distribution in the potentially mineral rich States;
- (b) if so, the names of States and the steps taken to explore existence of new mineral wealth;
- (c) whether, with a view to give the necessary fillip it is also proposed to form an Indo-French Working Group on mineral exploration; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI JAYSINGRAO GAIKWAD PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir. The initiatives of the Government are aimed at encouraging exploration and development of the mineral resources in the potentially mineral rich States, Exploration of minerals are being carried out through its own agencies like Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited (MECL), State DGM's and by the private sectors.

(b) Mineral exploration will be continued by GSI in all mineral rich States. MECL is continuing exploration in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Orissa and West Bengal. 109 prospecting licences/reconnaissance permits have been granted in favour of many multinational companies for aerial prospecting in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat,

Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Indo-French Working Groups on Mineral Exploration and Development was set up under the aegis of the Indo-French Joint Committee on Economic and Technical Co-operation in 1986, to enhance the capabilities of the Indian Organisations in the field of Geology and mining and also to obtain state-of-the-art technology and equipment. French bilateral assistance aggregating around 204—23 million FF has been given through 21 projects under the Indo-French Financial Protocol.

Transferring Bauxite Mines to BALCO

1473. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Shamu-Behu, the two bauxite mines in Koraput district in Orissa, have been given to BALCO just two days before BALCO handedover to Stirelite Company; and

(b) what is the total deposit of bauxite in the above mines and the approximate cost, which can be exploited from these mines?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI JAY SING RAO GAIKWAD PATIL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) As reported by Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), a subordinate organization under the Ministry of Mines, the geological reserves of Sasu Bahumali deposit (which is one deposit) and adjoining Pasangmali deposit are estimated as 81 million tonnes with an average grade of A1203 about 41.95 percent and SiO₂ about 2.6 percent.

Pending railway projects

1474. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) The number and details of Railway projects pending due to lack of funds;